The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and each other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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In law, there are no slaves—in fact, there are many.—Henri-Frederic Amiel.

WHOLE NO. 1102. WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1932 FRANK MORRISON, Secretary VOL. 22, NO. 11.

Green Says Wage-Cutting Employers Menace Welfare of the Entire Nation

A. F. of L. Chief Asserts Jobless Millions Endanger Our Government—Work for Idle Demanded — Cost - of - Living Wages Theory Riddled by Facts.

Washington.—With a scathing denunciation of "the primitive theory of wage-cutting as a remedy for industrial ills," William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, in an address before the Washington Chamber of Commerce, charged wage-cutting employers with making war on the welfare of the Nation, with the helpless masses as their outstanding victims.

He said it made no difference whether the wage-cutters are private employers or the Government, they menace equally the public interest and the safety of our democratic institutions.

In positive terms he challenged the cost-of-living wages theory of wage-cutting economists and their employers and flatly repudiated the claim that lower living costs compensate for present reduced earnings.

All Have Suffered

"In the existing national emergency all groups have suffered and all classes of people have been forced to face grave difficult problems," Mr. Green said. "Values have been destroyed. Many have been reduced to poverty. A number of people who were considered wealthy have been made comparatively poor. While fear of working people have been forged into lifeless which necessitated the depletion of their meager savings.

Unemployed Suffer Most

"There is a distinguishing difference in the tragic effect of this long-continued depression upon those who have suffered because of impairment in financial values and those who have been forced because of unemployment, to exist upon a meager subsistence level. It is bad enough to sustain financial losses, but it is infinitely worse to be deprived of food and to suffer from the privations of hunger and want. Dwindling bank accounts may arouse feelings of disappointment and regret, but the sight of his children starving will drive a man to desperation.

Form of Government Threatened

"The structure of our Government has stood the test of time. Democracy, will not permanently withstand the assaults made upon it by an unsound economic system. The perpetuation of our form of Government and the preservation of our governmental institutions depend very largely upon the social contentment and well-being of the masses of the people.

Put Idle Millions to Work

"The immediate problem is to place men and women now idle at work in the industries and occupations of business enterprises of the Nation, thus restoring to them their buying power and reviving markets which have been dormant for the past three years. Any avoidable increase in unemployment at this time, would be most deplorable.

"The policy should be supplemented by a fixed and determined effort to maintain the existing diminished purchasing power of those who are employed, using that as a basis upon which to rebuild shattered markets and structure. There can be no resumption of industrial activity in any section of the country until a demand has been created for manufactured goods. This demand must be predicated upon human needs and buying power. There must be a market before goods can be manufactured or sold.

"We know that the basis of our economic distress is found in the fact that buying and consuming power has been very largely destroyed. The mechanical equipment of industry has outstripped the point of perfection, means nothing if there is no market for manufactured goods. The wheels of industry will remain silent and invested capital will bring no earning power as long as the men and women who labor are idle and unable to buy.

Wage- Cutting Is Like Blood-Letting

"Labor has long understood that if the buying power of the masses of the people were constantly reduced through the imposition of wage reductions unemployment would increase, social distress would prevail and industry would suffer.

"Labor firmly believes that wage-cutting means the underwriting of the depression. Wage-cutting is like bloodletting. It leaves the patient weakened and exhausted. It is amazing that many industrial leaders adhere to the primitive policy of wage-cutting as a remedy for industrial ills. They persist in the application of this policy notwithstanding the facts and the records show that such decreases in wages reduce the purchasing power of the people upon whose buying power the living standards and the consuming power of the masses of the people upon a lower level.

Cost-of-Living Wages

"The excuse offered by some economists who support industrial leaders in the pursuit of a wage-cutting policy is that a reduction in commodity prices, with a corresponding increase in the purchasing power of the dollar, justifies such action. They assume from this that cheap prices, cheap labor, with lowered standards of living, make for the prosperity of the individual. They base their belief that the American standard of living, which must be commensurate with the requirements of American citizenship, should be based upon the purchasing power of the dollar instead of upon the purchasing power of the dollar.

"Labor refuses to accept this principle of economic philosophy. It knows from experience that it is unsound and in application, unworkable.

"The sale of manufactured goods and the volume of business have always followed the declining value of the contents of the pay envelope.

Pay Cuts Exceed Living-Cost Decrease

"During the first half of the present period following the stock market collapse of 1929 the incomes of the workers have been reduced fifty per cent. In February, 1932, wage payments to workers in factories and railroad shops were just one-half of the 1929 average.

"The cost of living has decreased to some extent, but not sufficiently to compensate for this loss. While workers have suffered a loss amounting to fifty cents out of each dollar the decline in prices has saved them only eighteen cents. The workers receive thirty cents today to buy one dollars' worth of living necessities. They only have fifty cents with which to buy it.

"Accounting for both the decline in prices and wages, the purchasing income now, in the terms of the goods bought, are thirty-nine per cent below the 1929 level. During February, 1932, sales to consumers were thirty per cent below the 1929 average.

"These facts are the best answer that can be given by the hundreds of statisticians and economists that the increasing purchasing power of the dollar offsets the forced reductions imposed upon credited for manufactured goods. This wage earners."

International Employer Conspiracy Against Labor

The refusal of those who own and operate industry to reduce hours according to the larger output of labor due to technological progress, and increase wages to whatever extent may be necessary to provide a market for the output, is evidently an international conspiracy of reactionary employers in every country.

When Mr. Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, explained the British budget in the House of Commons, Mr. Lansbury, leader of the Labor opposition, succinctly observed: "There can be no real peace in the world until the consumption of goods matches the production of goods. The Opposition does not agree that the world is suffering from want. The world is suffering because mankind has not yet discovered how to distribute the abundance which it is possible to make and manufactured goods. The wheels of industry will remain silent and invested capital will bring no earning power as long as the men and women who labor are idle and unable to buy.

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Repression Instead of Food and Work

The use of Government force to repress demonstrations of the jobless instead of providing them with work or decent subsistence is cropping out with menacing frequency in the industrial countries of the world.

The same reactionary method has now appeared in New Zealand after certain militant protests against the inadequacy of Government relief.

The Labor Party announces that the people will have buying power sufficient to purchase all the commodities of mass production is Labor's way, and the only way, to settle the unemployment question.

Adjusting wages so that the people will have buying power sufficient to purchase all the commodities of mass production is Labor's way, and the only way, to settle the distribution problem ethically.

Those who own and control industry pretend to be willing to apply either of these principles to our industrial system.

They are questioning it. Will Labor and thousands of other intelligent and forward-looking citizens permit these hidebound reactionaries to carry us all down to ruin in their endeavor to save a form of production and distribution that has neither sanity nor ethics to support it?

Frey Places Blame for Depression On Machinery and Inadequate Pay

Secretary A. F. of L. Metal Trades Department Says Wages Too Low to Buy Mass Production Output Threw Millions Out of Work—Labor Must Have Voice in Controlling Productive Mechanism

Washington.—The principle of rugged individualism applied to the distribution of industrial products and the use and methods coupled with wages utterly inadequate to provide a market for the commodities produced by American labor under mass production were set forth as the major forces responsible for the business depression by John P. Frey, secretary-treasurer of the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, in a radio address on "How Modern Industry Came to America."

The address was the third of a series on the general subject "American Labor and the Nation" broadcast over the Columbia network under the auspices of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education with the cooperation of the American Federation of Labor and the Workers Education Bureau of America.

Depression Problems

"From what seemed to be the most prosperous condition our country has ever experienced we have plunged into the greatest industrial depression. The raw material, the transportation systems, the factories with their mechanical equipment, the executives, the engineers and the workmen, all are here. None of our natural resources has been destroyed. None of our acquired knowledge—mechanical, scientific, has been destroyed. Our population has been added to at the rate of the greatest industrial progress Americans have ever been forced to study."

Industrial Engineers' Responsibility

Mr. Frey placed considerable blame for the depression on the "industrial engineers who have given us mass production methods and processes." He said "they were either better engineers than they were economists, or that they believed their responsibility ended with the engineering profession, and that the economic forces and human problems their methods created were issues with which others in financial and administrative positions should solve."

Increased Output, Low Wages

"One of the most glaring examples of this lack of economic wisdom in the operation of our mass production methods" he pointed out, "is in the payment of wages in the highly mechanized industries. With a vast increase in mass power, the American workman actually received less per volume and value of his product than many European workmen."

No Market for Mass Production

"So far our more scientifically directed mass production methods have not proved an unmixed blessing. The ability to operate at low standards for any of its employees with one workman is of no practical value unless the people can buy the product.

"The ability of the miner to produce coal from the vein is of little service unless there are purchasers for the coal.

"The ability of the workmen to turn out marvelous automobile factories is regulated by the ability of the American people to buy the product.

Machinery Displaces Workers

"Scientific studies, though sometimes lacking in soundly scientific conclusions, set in motion by mistaken practices which definitely and systematically almost eliminate the same number of workmen required to produce the same volume of manufactured goods, and at the same time eliminate the use of skilled labor.

Shortsighted Engineers

"It should have been apparent to those who were introducing these revolutionary methods in industry, that unless industry found work for those who were being eliminated, that there would be a growing volume of unemployment. Apparently the responsibility was left to others, and little by little, but definitely and progressively, men were eliminated from the industries in which they had made their livelihood.

Machinery Destroys Millions of Jobs

"The skilled mechanics found the craft knowledge it had taken them years to acquire of no further value.

"The synchronizing of sound with the motion pictures eliminated thousands of musicians. The production of plate glass worked practically a revolution in process. The automatic glass-blowing machine eliminated the highly skilled bottle blower. Automatic machinery has been installed which takes bottles or other containers made of tin or fiber, fills, seals, labels and packs them in cartons ready for shipment, practically eliminating human labor except as seeing that the automatic machine is supplied with its material and the product removed.

Per Capita Production Increased

"While complete statistical evidence has not been collected which would indicate the extent to which labor has been eliminated, it is held that the workman's per capita production has been increased approximately 50 per cent within a few years, in those industries the per capita increased production amounts to several hundred, and in some instances more than a thousand per cent.

New Industries Do Not Absorb Jobless

"It is true that new industries have been developed, new occupations have evolved, which have given employment to numbers of those who had been eliminated from the industries in which they had formerly earned their livelihood. But these opportunities have not utterly failed to absorb the number of workmen who had been displaced.

Unemployment Nullifies Prosperity

"For some time this problem popularly called technological unemployment has been studied; first, so that the facts might be ascertained and industrial and economic policies established which would make modern industrial methods a blessing instead of a burden upon hundreds of thousands of workmen.

"This country can no more be prosperous with part of its wage earners employed and the other vainly seeking work, than it can be a land of liberty if its citizenship is part free and part slave.

Who Shall Direct Forces of Production?

"One manifest problem is in the directing responsibility, the authority, which shall sit in the driver's seat and take the steering wheel. Is it to be the bankers who supply credit; management which directs plant policy; the engineers who study and invent and develop and guide industrial processes; labor which depends for its existence on employment, or a combination of them, a cooperative relationship?

"The public is vitally affected by the answer.

Individual Initiative or State Control?

"Are we to abandon American conceptions of local autonomy and initiative, based on free thinking and free will, to look to the State to solve problems which are immediately affected in a more competent and experienced to deal with than any one else?

Equitable Distribution Unsolved

"In a large measure we have solved the basic problems of production," Mr. Frey concluded. "It is evident that we have lamentably failed to solve the problem of distribution, to balance production with consumption and provide a stable employment for workmen.

Cooperative Control Necessary

"What are the essential policies required to make our wonderful mechanism for production beneficial to the nation as a whole?

"The American Federation of Labor is convinced that the problems which exist, and those which must arise in the future, can only be adjusted or regulated through a closer and more thorough-going degree of cooperation between all of the factors who play a part in the development and the operation of our industries."

AFL ASKS BILLION FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Federation's Business Survey Says Crisis in Unemployment Relief Must be Met by Government Declaration That a National Emergency Exists, with Adequate Measures to Prevent Catastrophe.

Washington.—The American Federation in its Monthly Survey of Business declares the unemployment situation is so severe that the Federal Government must declare a national emergency and take appropriate measures to prevent a great human catastrophe."

The Federation urged that the Government provide work for the jobless by appropriating at least one billion dollars for construction work and by devising a method to make available for business enterprise the "vast credit funds which the Federal Reserve banks and Reconstruction Finance Corporation have shot into the private banks."

Unparalleled Relief Crisis

"We are close upon an unparalleled relief crisis. By autumn, the present month brings it nearer. Nearly 8,000,000 are still unemployed and as relief funds are exhausted, there will be nothing stands between them and starvation.

"We can no longer care for the unemployed by relief alone. Government work is imperative and must be provided. The billion dollars worth of authorized Government work and the credit funds which the Federal Reserve banks and Reconstruction Finance Corporation have shot into the private banks.

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"Timid, unimaginative action will not make all these plans increasingly effective. We cannot stand by and see people starve when we could bring them food and their buying could help start recovery. It is necessary for the Government to declare a national emergency and take appropriate measures to prevent a great human catastrophe.

Demand for Goods Decreases

"Every depression ends when people have jobs and have enough money to put into industry. In this depression, the demand for goods has fallen for over two years and is still shrinking. In March consumer buying was 31 per cent below normal, and still declining. No new industry has come into the picture to create jobs and start demand.

Jobs Will End Depression

"The key to our economic difficulties is to put people to work. To create buying power and a chance for profits. That is the key to getting us out of depression. That is the only effective cure for Federal budget. It is the key to relief for the millions now out of jobs and to buy bread. It is the key to stopping liquidation. It is the key to restoring confidence and hope.

Billion Dollars for Public Works

"By bold, direct policies," the survey asserted, "the Federal Government could assume responsibility for an emergency and reverse the tide of depression. Authority now exists in the Government for public works construction. This "would give jobs directly to those who need them and through orders for materials to other industries would create indirect employment."

Bond Issue Suggested

The survey stated that Congress has already authorized construction undertakings amounting to $1,903,456,576. Finalizing these projects would furnish employment to several hundred thousand workers during the next few months. To pay for the projects "bonds would be issued to be grounded in the more prosperous years which they would help create."

The survey pointed out, however, that "public work could not furnish employment fully at once. Authorization of unemployment must get jobs through existing channels—production in private industries.

"Production cannot increase without credit. Industry must have refinanced a loan for plant improvement or new machinery. Farm must have bank credit to finance work on orders which would give hundreds of jobs."

Banks Refuse Credit

The survey continued that despite the fact that the Government has made hundreds of millions of dollars freely available for the banks during the last few months, the banks have locked up the money in Government bonds, refused to reputable business concerns, thus preventing production of goods and thereby reducing employment. It asserted that either the banks must release the money instead of a burden upon the Government must make loans direct to business concerns. By using the national credit to give our citizens an opportunity to earn bread," the survey said, "we preserve private property and avert the consequences of widespread starvation."

MARYLAND LABOR ASKS PROHIBITION REFERENDUM

State Convention Endorsed $5,000,000,000 Bond Issue for Jobless Relief. Beer Tax, 5-Day Week for Barbers, 5-Day Week for Federal Employes, 8-Hour Day for Women —Opposed Sales Tax and Federal Pay Cuts.

Cumberland, Md.—The Maryland State and District of Columbia Federation of Labor assembled in convention here today, adopted a resolution of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution. The resolution urges the repeal of the dry law, but said it should not be repealed "until a referendum" is held. This should be done, the resolution read, "for the relief of unemployment."

The convention urged Gov. Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland and members of the Maryland Legislature to provide relief for the jobless, it was stated that in Allegany county alone 700 families face eviction for nonpayment of taxes.

Bond Issue for Unemployment Relief

The convention also petitioned the President and Congress to enact legislation to provide works bond issue for Federal unemployment relief, endorsed Senator O'Gorman's bill to increase the taxation of beer, supported the six-day work week for barbers, and called for legislation prohibiting Federal employes from accepting side work for profit in competition with private industry.

Henry F. Browning, president of the Federation, urged a reasonable wage scale on public work. He said laborers on the Cumberland post office building were paid a very low scale and that as low as seven cents an hour had been paid by Maryland on some of its road projects. He declared a minimum of 50 cents, which the city of Cumberland has been paying for some time, should be applied to all projects.

The provisions of the economy bill before the U. S. Senate cutting wages of Federal employes and affecting their working conditions were condemned, the tax on admissions to theaters was opposed, and the passage of the American Federation of Labor in opposition to the sales tax was approved. Senators Goldsborough and Tydings were requested to present a bill calling for a five-day week without loss of time or lower privileges.

A delegation will be named to introduce a bill at the next session of the Maryland General Assembly changing the working day for women from ten to eight hours.

Mr. McGrady of Baltimore was elected president; Frank J. Coleman, Washington, secretary; Jacob Hagerstown, treasurer. The following vice presidents were chosen: N. A. James and Mrs. Mary Dickens, Baltimore; Mr. Higgins and Charles Reed, Baltimore; J. H. Brehaney and W. L. Hall, Cumberland.

James J. McKee, Vice President Plumbers' Association, Dies

Ingram, Pa.—James J. McKee, first general vice president of the United Association of Plumbers and Steam Fitters of the United States and Canada, died at his home here on May 11 from pneumonia.

Mr. McKee was born in Pittsburgh, and served his apprenticeship in the plumbing trade. He was originally initiated into the old International Association of Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters, which afterwards became the United Association, and was appointed by the latter.

For several years he was auxiliary secretary, treasurer of the United Association and for 22 years held the office of general vice president. He was also a member of the board of trustees, president, which office he held at the time of his death. He was a delegate to every convention of the United Association since 1906, and was a member of the Executive Committee which brought forth the Association's benefit system, and also the present representation at conventions.

The funeral services were held at Saint Phillip Catholic Church, Crafton, where solemn requiem high mass was celebrated by Father Cox of Pittsburgh. He was a staunch trade unionism and champion of the unemployed.

Those who attended the last rites included General President John Coefield, Secretary-Treasurer Thomas E. Burke, and Assistant Secretary Frank J. Kennedy of the United Association, also William J. Spencer, secretary-treasurer of the Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor.

Congress Must Not Balance Budget By Pay Reductions, Green Declares

Tells Washington Chamber of Commerce Government Employes Are Already Underpaid —Pay Slashes Would Intensify Social Unrest—Major Duty of Congress Is to Provide Work for Idle.

Washington.—A ringing demand that Congress completely abandon efforts to reduce the pay of Government employes as a means of balancing the budget was made by William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, in an address before the Washington Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Green declared that most Government workers receive smaller remuneration than similar employes in private industry, and that the budget can be balanced without attacking the living standards of many thousands of Federal employes.

"Many of the reasons assigned for the imposition of reductions in wages in private industry do not apply to the Government or to employes of the Government," Mr. Green said. "The competitive argument cannot apply nor can the alleged sheer necessities claimed by private employers, as a justification for reductions in wage earners' pay, apply to the Federal Government. In fact, the earnings which accrue to the Treasury of the United States as a result of the taxes imposed upon Federal workers would be comparatively inconsequential.

Wage Reductions Destroy Morale

"It may be possible to limit and curtail private industry and to completely destroy it through ruinous competition and wage reductions, but such a condition must not and cannot be brought about in the administration of the affairs of government.

"Efficiency and a high morale on the part of Government employes are valuable factors which should be preserved and encouraged in order to guarantee the maintenance of the administrative work of the Government upon a high plane. These valuable and desirable attributes cannot be preserved if Government workers are forced to forego the enjoyment of living standards which have been progressively erected through years of effort and service."

Federal Employes Receive Low Pay

Mr. Green flatly contradicted the claim advanced by Federal wage-cutters that Government employes are a favored class and receive high remuneration. They are not, he said, for thirty years their pay had not kept pace with the earnings of workers in private industry, and emphasized the fact that the Government policy is to pay highly skilled men less than standards set by non-government employers. These "tremendous gaps had been made to balance the allurement of larger remuneration outside with the feeling of security and steady work which they had enjoyed.

"It will be difficult to hold such exceptional men," he asserted, "if this sense of security is destroyed. In this growing unemployment crisis, a man who received $2,200 or more, but less than $5,000, per year.

"Referring to the largest and most notoriously underpaid group, etc., is astonishing to note that in the three-fourths of a million civil employes of the Government only three in this hundred receive $5,000 or more per year. This includes the members of the President's Cabinet, assistant secretaries and bureau chiefs. In contrast, about one in six Government employes receives less than $1,000 a year or $26 per week and three out of every four receive less than $2,200 a year or $43 per week.

Fallacy of Pay-Cut Budget-Balancing

"It can readily be seen that in order to make any substantial reduction in the amount of the Government pay roll it will be necessary to draw the reduction from those least able to pay it. A ten per cent cut in salaries above $2,700 will only reduce the civil pay roll about one and one-half per cent, and will only reduce the total expenditures about one-third of one per cent.

Balance Budget Without Pay Cuts

"The budget can be balanced without resorting to wage cutting by the Federal Government. Our country is great and resourceful. Any cut in wages which might be imposed would not affect, to any perceptible degree, the balancing of the budget. Failure to accomplish the balancing of the budget would result in the depression which would be experienced by the Government. The prevention of social unrest and industrial stagnation and the preservation and safeguarding of human life are obligations which are worthy and in harmony than balancing the budget at this time.

Government Must Provide Work

"The greatest task of the Government, and of the Congress and others in importance, is to provide work for the unemployed. I believe that human distress and to restore the faith and confidence of the American people in our institutions, but such a condition must not and cannot be brought about in the administration of the affairs of government.

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Making Labor Pay for Depression

By HON. JAMES M. MEAD
Congressman from Buffalo, N. Y.

It seems certain that Labor will be called upon to pay the greatest price in liquidating this depression.

It is Labor that fills the ranks of the millions of unemployed who tramp the streets of our cities looking for work they cannot find. It is Labor that makes up the endless breadlines that disgrace us. It is Labor that suffers from hunger, for want of shelter, from sickness and even death, all brought on by the depression.

Labor will be called upon to produce a large share of the money required to balance the Federal budget.

Labor will be called upon to suffer most because through arbitrary, unscientific reductions in appropriation bills thousands must be thrown out of work.

Labor will suffer again because of the idleness resulting from our curtailment of the public works and building construction program, and will be now strike a deadly blow at Labor by cutting the wages of Federal employes and thereby those of advanced working conditions which have heretofore surrounded their employment.

By cutting twelve million from the Post Office Appropriation Bill in the House, and with signs of similar reductions more apparent in the Senate, approximately forty thousand postal workers alone will find themselves jobless.

This statement is made by the Postmaster General, who will be to administer the law subject to the reduced appropriation.

Instead of supporting the unemployed, the Federal employe will find himself one of the army who will march, until now, recruited from the ranks of private industry.

Are we so blind to the best interests and welfare of our country as to throw thousands of our own workers out into the streets and cut the wages of those who remain in the service?

Are we to become the victims of this child-like hysteria that grips the Congress, which has been developed by propaganda and strengthened by our own mistaken economy?

We seem helpless and hopeless in an undisciplined, chaotic stampede that can only result in more deflation increasing the unemployed, reducing consumption, and retarding recovery.

We are bent on dragging out this depression until our workers will either have lost their lives from starvation or their patriotism for want of leadership.

Picketing and Commercial Advertising

The District of Columbia Local of the International Fur Workers' Union of the United States and Canada has presented a vital picketing question to the Board of Commissioners of the District.

Some months ago the Commissioners adopted certain regulations to restrict the time and manner of picketing and the display of sidewalk space to advertising signs which led up to the restrictions labor controversies were not mentioned.

The Fur Workers' Union desired a certain space for picketing and asked to be allowed to erect signs displaying the fact that a strike existed.

The Commissioners announced that a public hearing on the proposed regulations will be held on June 8. The outcome of the hearing will be watched with interest by trade unionists.

In law, a violation of the right of an individual includes also a violation of the right of any number of individuals.—Samuel Gompers.